



# Tips on Developing Effective Transportation Air Quality Public Outreach Materials



*Getting There with Clean Air*

# **Tips on Developing Effective Transportation Air Quality Public Outreach Materials**

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## Introduction

Public information campaigns are essential for the success of voluntary programs intended to reduce air pollution through transportation alternatives. These efforts are largely dependent upon public understanding and acceptance of the health, environmental, and economic benefits which may result from utilizing transportation alternatives contingent on individual travel choices. The success of these communication efforts relies on the careful development and presentation of a message to an intended audience. This document has been created to help State and local transportation-air quality professionals develop and produce effective public outreach and education campaigns. It covers the fundamentals of creating a variety of informational materials such as fact sheets, brochures, posters, videos, and public service announcements.

Basic information is included on how to analyze your needs, identify your audience, and develop a theme that will best serve your purpose, while engaging and informing your audience. Guidance is also provided on message development and presentation for optimum impact. A resource list begins on page 16. You may find additional useful information on these websites and in the articles and books listed.

## Developing Public Outreach Materials

Public outreach materials are typically used to describe programs or organizations and create a more knowledgeable citizenry. They are sometimes used to educate,

sometimes to inform or create awareness, and/or cause an action or change in behavior by the recipient. One of the first steps in the decision making process to develop public outreach materials is to conduct an information needs analysis. A public outreach program or campaign can't be very effective if you aren't familiar with the knowledge level and information needs of your audience members. Ask yourself:

- What do they need to know?
- Do they know about the program/topic?
- How much do they know?
- Are they interested in learning more?

If your intended audience already knows everything about a particular program or topic, there is not a need to produce any additional materials. Don't get into the habit of producing materials on a regular basis just because you think you need to. Make sure there is an information need in your community which matches your outreach goals.

## Determine Goals/Objectives

To create a communications program, determine what you are trying to accomplish. Decide on your overall goal and the objectives needed to meet that goal. This could be part of a strategic communication plan or an extension of your public affairs mission. For example, the primary goal might be to educate your public about the relationship between air quality and transportation and the resulting impact on public health. The secondary goal might be less specific, such as creating awareness about the state of the air quality in your

community. Now, what do you need to do to accomplish this goal?

## Identify Target Audience

Prior to producing public outreach materials, it is very important to specifically identify your intended or “target” audiences. You may have a variety of public outreach materials or just a few, but your public outreach campaigns will be much more effective if you focus each particular piece (whether written, visual, or video) on a specific audience. For instance, you may identify a need for a fact sheet on the effects of driving on air pollution. Who needs this information? Children, teenage drivers, and adult drivers could all be identified as potential target audiences. Each of these target audiences, however, will require a very different approach in order to effectively communicate a message. Therefore, you would need to produce three different types of public outreach materials for these three distinct audiences.

Identifying and analyzing your audience will help determine the components of your outreach campaign. For example, if you are promoting a vanpool program in a large urban area with a history of pollution reduction efforts, your primary audience will be adult commuters who have experience with significant traffic problems and have a good basic knowledge of the effect auto exhaust has on air pollution. If, however, you are in a mid-size western city that has experienced recent growth and has recently become a non-attainment area for smog, you have a very different situation. Your audience will likely be less informed

on the issue and perhaps harder to convince of the benefits of altering long-time driving habits to correct a problem with which they aren’t familiar.

You may have more than one audience. After determining your primary audience, try to identify secondary audiences. For example, if targeting suburban drivers who could use a park-and-ride option and a new city-center bus shuttle when they commute, a secondary audience could be commuters who need their cars but could use the shuttle for inner city trips during the workday, or students attending a college located downtown.

## Develop Overall Theme/ Messages

Once an information need and audience have been established, you can begin to formulate a theme for a public outreach program. Your theme will be the overall approach that sets the tone for all the public outreach materials developed throughout your communications program. If your problem is haze, your goal could be reduction of airborne particulate matter. This would be the subject around which you build your theme and subsequent messages. A theme could be “Less Haze, More Fun Days!”

*The messages you develop to support your program should be specific, easy to remember, and meaningful to your program goals.*

If you are promoting a park-and-ride bus program for commuters, your messages could be about the benefits to the commuter or benefits to the community and its resources. By showing drivers options to

reduce the number of single occupant vehicles on the roadways, you can create a more knowledgeable and conscientious citizenry. Messages can have many components. For example, your broad message could focus on the adverse effects of air pollution and the benefits realized from pollution reduction. But, you might also present more personalized messages relating to reducing the individual's costs of commuting and the benefits of not having to deal with driving in traffic and the hassle and expense of parking. The important thing to remember about message development is to keep it simple.

## **Choose Outreach Tools/Products**

When you have analyzed your needs, identified your audience, developed your theme, and created messages, begin brainstorming on what types of materials you want to use. At this point, be creative and don't confine yourself to budget or capability concerns. Let your imagination be the driver. When you have developed a wish list of potential public outreach materials, you can go on to investigate the practicality of each component and prioritize them based on budget, schedule, and what has the potential of the greatest impact.

Determining the types of materials to develop is dependent on a variety of factors, including budget, need, and past successes. Usually States and local agencies are familiar with what works in their communities. Some agencies or organizations with substantial budgets have the luxury of hiring consultants and marketing firms to develop materials. Smaller organi-

zations and agencies with modest budgets may have to figure out a way to produce everything themselves. You will need to determine how much money you have to spend on materials and determine how much outside help you can afford. However, even if your needs are great and your means are modest, ingenuity and imagination can greatly broaden your horizons.

Even though most commercial marketing, public relations or design firms do not donate time and materials to government agencies, some will work out discounts. Some might even donate services, depending on whether they can get some free advertising or name recognition from the program. It never hurts to ask. Also, community access television studios and local colleges can be sources of free or low-cost assistance with video and audio production for television and radio advertisements, or for general public relations activities. Contests for poster art can be an effective and popular way to get your graphic work at a low cost. EPA's Smart Travel Resource Center has examples of how some organizations have managed to get an amazing amount of bang for their bucks.

Types of public outreach materials fall into three categories, printed products, such as brochures and fact sheets; graphics products, such as posters and exhibits; and audio/video products, including public service announcements (PSA). Determining which materials to develop to communicate your messages depends on your specific goals, your community needs, and your budget. It is important to first determine your abilities and budgetary constraints, and then ascertain the needs of your audience. Once this is accomplished,

## Smart Travel Resource Center

*The Smart Travel Resource Center is an electronic depository of transportation-related air quality public outreach and education information established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Mobile Sources.. The database facilitates the exchange of information via the world wide web ([www.epa.gov/omswww/strc.htm](http://www.epa.gov/omswww/strc.htm) ) concerning outreach efforts that provide the public with the information they need to become active partners with all levels of government in protecting the environment. It will aid State and local officials in realizing their goals of mobile source air pollution reduction through public outreach and education.*

*The Smart Travel Resource Center contains information on transportation-related air quality community-based public outreach and education resources and materials. Interested transportation practitioners, air quality regulators, public decision makers, industry representatives, consultants, and public interest groups who support alternatives to driving alone can utilize this resource to access information on established and developing programs that relate to their needs.*

you can determine the most effective method for delivery of your message within those parameters.

### Printed Products

Brochures, fact sheets, and other printed materials, such as news releases and newsletters, are typically the backbone of an outreach program. They can be informative and inexpensive and allow you to leave your message with the recipient. Choose a printed product if your audience needs lots of information or if the message needs background information in order to convince the audience to support a pro-

gram or change a behavior. You will want to produce the type of product that invites or encourages people to pick up and read. Printed materials are typically easy to mail, hand out at various meetings, public places, or events. However, you must carefully plan your method of distribution. If you don't have effective mechanisms to reach your audience members or can't afford postage, printed materials can be a waste of money. If this is the case, an option might be to use a paid advertisement in the local newspaper. Although the costs of ads are high, you may find you can reach more people for less money overall than producing and printing materials that are then mailed.

If you decide to use printed products, make sure you follow accepted practices for designing and producing materials so that they are readable, visually interesting, and apt to be retained by the reader. Consider investing in a professional design using color and graphics to ensure effectiveness.

### Graphics Products

Posters, exhibits, and other graphics are useful for reinforcing your message once you have established your theme and have begun educating your audience. They typically attract a wide audience and, if well designed and appealing, can easily get a message across. The drawbacks can be cost and distribution methods. Make sure you identify how the graphics products will be displayed, where they will be displayed, and who will be likely to see them. Use of graphic design and color on posters is almost essential. People are so bombarded with visual messages on a daily basis that your graphics product will not even be

noticed if it is not striking in some way to the intended audiences.

### **Audio/Video Products**

Video can be the most effective medium because of the use of music and action, but it is also likely to be the most expensive. Production costs for a 30-second video can run from \$600 to as much as \$15,000 or more. However, remember that ingenuity and imagination can prevail if video is identified as your most effective alternative. PSAs are typically much less expensive because they are meant to be very short and are usually carried by local TV stations at no cost to the agency or organization sponsoring them.

Audio spots for airing on radio are much less expensive to produce than video. A 30-second spot with a single voice and no music can be recorded for about \$300 to \$500. Multiple voices and music add interest and emotion to your ad. An effective ad can be professionally produced for about \$1000 (more information on audio/video techniques and placement costs begins on page 11).

### **Testing Your “Product”**

When you have completed your printed or recorded projects it is a good idea to test them for clarity and effectiveness. You can get useful feedback by submitting the final product for review by a team composed of technical experts, editors, public outreach specialists, and representatives of your target audience. Ask for a critique based on how easily the message is to understand and how effective the message was pre-

sented. You can present it to neighbors or friends if your product is intended for a general public audience. Public outreach practitioners from other government agencies or industry can be asked to offer critiques. Teachers can offer insight on the appropriateness of your message for students in their grade level.

Another option is to hire a market research consultant to conduct an evaluation for you. This is typically done by soliciting individuals from the public via phone solicitation or by seeking responses with advertisements. Participants are chosen either at random or by following specific criteria for selection. Participants can be surveyed individually, usually through a written questionnaire, or by assembling a focus group to review your material in a moderated discussion. The fee for these services will include your consultant's expenses and charges for their services as well as a fee given to each participant. Because the quality of an evaluation depends in part on the size the audience polled, this option can be quite expensive.

### **Tips on Producing Outreach Materials**

#### **Fact Sheets**

A fact sheet is typically a one- to four-page publication that provides information on a particular program or issue. Not as detailed as some brochures, fact sheets can be an effective means of providing basic information. In its simplest form, a fact sheet contains only text, but the use of color, photographs, and graphics add eye appeal and reinforce the message.



Fact sheets are widely used as a mechanism for public outreach. Their size and presentation promote ease of distribution and accessibility of information. Available in black and white or multi-color formats, fact sheets are relatively inexpensive and easy to reproduce for a variety of uses. They are usually cost-effective to produce and can be economically shipped in bulk quantities to meeting sites, distributed through mass mailings, posted on bulletin boards, or uploaded to an Internet site. They are an efficient means of delivering information that changes frequently and can easily be inserted in information packets to meet special needs. If a fact sheet fits your particular informational requirements, the following may be helpful in its preparation.

**Develop the concepts to be presented before beginning the draft and identify the main theme and messages that are to be communicated.**

This process could be facilitated through a group discussion. Brainstorming sessions aid the development team in identifying the audience and establishing a basic outline of topics to be discussed.

**Focus on the main message and keep it simple.**

Try to deal with only one topic per fact sheet. Confusing the readers with unnecessary information will only detract from the point you are trying to make.

**Design fact sheets for formatting as Internet Web pages.**

When developing the fact sheet format, consider the possibility that it may later be reformatted as a Home Page on the Internet. Select a software program that can be readily converted. Computer specifica-

tions are constantly changing, so consult a local specialist. Choose graphics and photographs that will project well on a computer monitor and use color wherever possible.

**Keep the paper size manageable.**

An 11 x 17-inch sheet, folded and printed on both sides, yields a 4-page fact sheet. Many topics can be covered sufficiently on a single 8 x 11-inch sheet. The shorter the fact sheet, the more appealing it is to the potential reader and the cheaper it is to reproduce.

**Maximize the use of graphics, photographs, and color to enhance visual appeal and enforce the message.**

Use captions and color images liberally in place of text. Human nature is to look at pictures and captions first. Visual aids improve the mind's power of retention. They also make a complicated or technical issue or process easier to understand.

**Minimize text and use significant amounts of whitespace to maintain user interest and readability if possible.**

Avoid technical jargon and maintain a simple writing style and language to promote understanding, but avoid talking down to your audience. Aim at an 8th-grade reading level whenever possible and have several editors review the fact sheet for readability and understanding. Avoid statements that will "date" the material being presented.

**Be objective and convey the necessary message.**

Be aware of cultural and political sensitivities and make sure to cover all points of

view. State only facts from credible sources. Verify all statements and document your sources. It is also important to obtain any necessary releases for copy-righted material and photographs and credit sources where appropriate. Time invested here is well spent and can help avoid legal and public relations problems later.

### **Obtain technical review.**

Submit the initial and final drafts to a team composed of technical experts, editors, public outreach specialists, and representatives of your target audience for a thorough review. This step will reduce the likelihood of mistakes and misrepresentation of facts, as well as enhance the overall readability of the publication.

As with any informational material, the services of a professional graphics designer will give your fact sheet a polished and professional look. Professional graphics services cost about \$35 to \$50 per hour. As with any other creative endeavor, the hours required are directly related to the complexity of the project. You should expect an estimate of hours required with a minimum and maximum range. If the budget is too limited, however, there are a number of commercial desktop publishing software programs, available from local office and computer supply stores, that can be used for in-house production of fact sheets.

### **Brochures**

A good descriptive brochure is just as important in communicating a message as is letterhead paper and a business card. The basic brochure introduces your organization or program and can call the reader to

action. It tells a story and is usually more detailed than a poster, fact sheet, or public service announcement. A well-written brochure should answer most of the reader's questions about a particular topic. Once printed and distributed, it continues to convey your message.

A basic brochure does four things:

- it describes your program or idea,
- points out why your program is of interest and/or benefit,
- describes your organization, and
- identifies sources of information.

Brochures have many uses as information pieces and they are easy to use. They can be enclosed in letters, press kits, presentation folders, or placed in public areas for display.

There are a wide variety of fonts, divided initially into serif (with "tails", such as this Times New Roman, or without, such as this Univers font). Varying the font and style/size of type breaks up the text blocks and help identify new sections and important information. Using a variety of styles, like white space, helps present your material in a visually pleasing manner.

They can be distributed at meetings and through mass mailings to reach larger segments of your audience.

To obtain maximum readability, keep the brochure simple and straightforward. Use white space to breakup the text and draw

the eye to important material or graphics. Use 12 pt type in a variety of fonts and styles. A common brochure format is an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper folded in thirds. This size is popular because it is inexpensive to print and distribute and can often be produced in-house. It

### **Type size/style and Fonts**

*The text and layout of this document offers a good example of proper use of a variety of type and fonts. The main text is printed in a Times font in size 12 pt type. Notice that the headers and sub-heads are in a different font, Helvetica, and size, 14 pt and 12 pt, respectively, while also presented in a varied style (style refers to normal, bold, italics, bold italics, and underline text).*

can be easily enclosed in a regular business size envelope (number 10) or mailed without an envelope. However, brochures can come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and can be long and still effective.

Do your homework before you begin a brochure and it will be much easier to complete. You'll

need to identify the purpose and audience. Answering the following questions early in the development process will help you stay focused.

- What is the current situation or problem being faced by your organization?
- What ideas are you promoting? What is your solution or program?
- What makes your program unique? What are its features?
- Why is the program of interest to the reader?
- What are the benefits of the program?
- What is the history of the organization or program?

- Why are you promoting this program?
- What action do you want your readers to take?
- What related services or programs should you highlight?
- Who can the reader contact for more information?

Keep the design simple. One great graphic or photograph is worth a thousand words. When designing the cover, remember that you'll only have a few seconds to grab the reader's attention. Use an interesting photo or graphic on the cover and a catch phrase (teaser), or maybe an intriguing question or stimulating fact about the topic. Your organization's name and/or logo can be included on either the front or back cover of the brochure, or even the last page. Closely examine brochures printed by others. They can be a good source of inspiration in developing a creative layout.

Experiment with the use of white space and different sizes and font styles. A typical rule is that the more white space, the better! There are few hard and fast rules for choosing fonts, although typically sans serif works well for the larger fonts used in headlines or titles and serif works best for the smaller fonts used for text and narratives. Fonts can create moods just like colors can, so try various options in creating drafts.

Production costs can vary widely depending on design, size, use of color, graphics, quantity to be printed, etc. A small budget and tight production schedule do not mean that your brochure will be less successful than one published by someone with unlimited time and money. A well-written

and attractively designed brochure will attract readers.

A professional graphic designer or printer can offer useful advice at the beginning of your project. Fees for services ranging from minor assistance to full production may surprise you. They are often very affordable, and the professional look that results could prevent your brochure from being confused with junk mail.

If your budget is restrictive, don't become discouraged. If you are inexperienced but computer literate, there are a number of desktop publishing software programs, such as Microsoft Publish and PageMaker, that can be used for in-house development of brochures. Many word processing programs also allow you to design simple brochures and may be easier for beginners to use. Both Word Perfect and Microsoft Word have built-in brochure templates.

High-quality color papers imprinted with computer templates are available from several manufacturers. With a few simple clicks of a button, you can insert information into the predesigned formats. This method is very affordable and produces good results.

If you don't have access to desktop publishing software, local quick-print and retail copy shops offer these services for reasonable fees.

## **Posters**

Posters, displays, and other graphic materials are effective media to communicate messages about a particular program or project. Typically a poster uses multiple colors and graphics with minimal text to

create a visual image that attracts attention and conveys a specific message to the viewer. As Marshall McLuhan said, "The medium is the message!" and, in the case of posters or other graphic display materials, one can easily understand what he meant. From the "Wanted" posters at the post office to movie posters at the theater, the human eye is typically drawn to the large graphic elements usually reflected on a poster.

Posters can serve as a learning tool by supporting written materials, such as education curricula in classrooms or fact sheets at an exhibit or conference, or can stand alone and be posted on bulletin boards or in public meeting places.

Start the poster development process by synthesizing your intended purpose, audience, and key messages. In one sentence, you should be able to state the message you want the viewer to walk away with. Once you've decided on the purpose, audience, and messages, sit down with a team and brainstorm creative ideas for the poster.

## **Keys to producing effective posters.**

The key to producing an effective poster is to focus on the graphic elements, since our society is so conditioned to billboards and advertisements that constantly compete for our visual attention. A poster can help cement an idea in the viewer's mind. Research shows that people have a tendency to remember more about a topic when it is presented with graphics and also retain the information longer.

## Use of color

The effective use of color is especially important in posters. Be familiar with the typical reactions to colors and the moods or feelings they evoke. When choosing a background color for your poster, for instance, the use of red or orange heightens emotions and causes excitability and tension in the viewer, gray represents neutrality, blue has a calming effect, green stimulates interaction, black represents power, and brown can create a more passive response. Don't overwhelm or confuse your viewer by combining too many colors.

*A good poster should be visually **striking** (make you stop!), **interesting** (make you read it!), and **memorable** (make you remember!).*

## Graphics

Graphics should be uncomplicated and easy to interpret. With the exception of some children's posters like the "Where's Waldo" series in which tiny, intricate graphics are used to help create the excitement of finding Waldo, graphics should be striking, visually appealing, and simple.

## Poster Size

Posters vary in size depending on the production process used and the vendor's equipment. Typically, production costs for a multi-color poster can range from less than \$50 to more than \$500. For mass quantities, costs go down incrementally. Posters can be produced on regular paper, laminated, or dry mounted for ease of display. Poster designs can be quite versatile and can be used as exhibit display

panels or as overhead transparencies to accompany a presentation.

A poster should be as large as possible for the intended placement and should communicate no more than 3 messages. One message is preferable, since the focus should be on the graphics. A professional graphic designer should be employed to

either create an original design, or to use an existing design in a new, creative way.

Poster size can cause distribution problems. There are several mailing options. Posters

which have not been laminated can be folded for mailing, however, this will cause creases along the fold line that will be apparent even if laminated or dry mounted. Creases can be avoided by rolling the poster and shipping it in a mailing tube, a more expensive method. Laminated posters should either be rolled or shipped flat like mounted posters to avoid damage to the finish.

## Text

Text should be kept to a minimum and should be easily readable from a distance of 6 feet. The message should be simple, concise, and memorable. Font size should be the largest possible for the headline or title of the poster. Don't use all capital letters, since this is more difficult to read. Several editors and a few representative members of the intended target audience should review the text before printing. This is usually easy to accomplish. If the poster is intended for a general public audience,

get the reaction of a few neighbors or friends. Public outreach representatives from various government agencies or industry are usually happy to review and give feedback on something as universal as a poster, especially since it doesn't take more than a few seconds to get their reaction. Local teachers know whether or not a particular poster will work for their grade level.

### **Technical jargon**

Technical jargon and acronyms should not be used unless they are so commonplace that all intended audience members would understand them. For example, in promoting the use of bus transit in a metropolitan area, the acronym for the transit authority would probably be familiar to most community members.

### **Videos**

Although typically more expensive to produce than other education and outreach mechanisms, video provides an active and interesting medium. A short video is a good alternative to a static text and/or graphic poster. It offers more opportunity for creativity and can provide more information in a relatively short time frame.

### **Public service announcements**

Short video PSAs for television, ranging from 10 to 60 seconds, and brief educational videos with a run time of under 10 minutes are typical options for public outreach and education videos. PSAs are time slots provided gratis or at a discount to promote worthy causes or as notification of public services. They offer a relatively inexpensive option for communicating

with a large segment of a community. They can enhance an outreach or education program by raising the level of local awareness. Although no longer required by the Federal Communications Commission to broadcast them, most television stations still discount or donate time to air high-quality PSAs of local interest. These announcements typically run in increments of 10, 15, 20, 30, and 60 seconds. However, 60 second PSA's may be hard to place due to the reluctance of broadcasters to donate that much air time to a single ad.

The shorter versions (10 to 20 seconds) are effective in reaching children or advertising specific events. These are usually text only or text over a video image accompanied by a voice over (an announcer reading the text and/or additional information). These spots can be professionally produced starting at around \$300.

Longer PSAs can be used to communicate broader messages about ongoing programs and their potential benefits. A 30-second PSA can be professionally produced for as little as \$600 or as much as \$15,000 and up, depending on the complexity of the production.

An effective attention-getting method for your PSA is to enlist the services of a local celebrity or well known public figure. Celebrities may charge a fee for their services, but you should be able to find high-profile citizens willing to donate their time and efforts as a public service. Most communities have a well-known sports figure, either professional, collegiate or even high school, who is visible and well liked in the community. Other examples

can be popular elected officials, renowned business leaders, or a respected president of a local college or university. Try to find someone with experience before the camera. If a number of takes are required, your cost will increase. Like wise, if your spokesperson appears nervous and is clumsy in the delivery of your message it will diminish the effectiveness of your PSA or ad.

Television meteorologists also can make effective spokespersons. They are professionals, known to your audience, and their work is a natural tie-in to air pollution issues. In addition, a relationship with a popular meteorologist can lead to a mutually beneficial relationship as described later in this section.

### **Short Videos**

Videos that run from 5 to 10 minutes can be effective when combined with displays at special events or used in the classroom or at special presentations before civic or business groups. Professional production costs for such videos range from \$50 per hour for preproduction (writing the script and planning for the budget, locations, actors, and props), \$900 per day for shooting the video, and \$175 per hour for post-production activities (editing, special effects, graphics, and/or text and credits). Another way to project cost is to use the general \$2,000 per minute measure which, in most cases, provides a good estimate.

### **Video News Release**

A video news release (VNR) is another common type of promotion. This is a short (20 to 60 seconds) video that promotes a

particular event and is distributed to television news organizations. However, most news directors prefer “B rolls” or “B clips,” which present video footage that can be voiced over from an accompanying fact sheet. Although costs vary with production values, B clips are generally cheaper to produce than video news releases.

Another advantage to VNRs and B clips is the opportunity to team with other programs in your area. If your video is shot using generic backgrounds, it could be appropriate for use by a number of programs in one region. Specific program scripts can then be written and used by multiple agencies who share the production costs.

### **Production and Air Time Logistics**

Smaller communities may not have the budget to cover professional production costs. Although some companies will donate time to local governments, it is not common. However, local community cable-access channels typically offer training and production assistance for little or no cost. The audience for cable-access channels is limited, but if you supply your own video tape, a copy can be made for airing on commercial stations.

While a professional or community access producer can offer assistance in scripting your message, it is best to have a clear idea of the message you want to convey, as well as the audience you want to reach before going into preproduction. Also, have a budget range in mind as well as a list of production requirements from the televi-

sion stations that will be running your finished video. Requirements for such things as tape size and restrictions on product placements in your PSA vary from station to station.

While commercial television airtime rates are prohibitive to many government agencies, paid advertisements offer benefits over PSAs. Time

slots for PSAs are controlled by the stations and typically are scheduled for low-viewer periods (early morning and late night) so the impact of your PSA can be limited. When you pay for your ad, you can control the time slot(s) that it will be aired. The cost for air time is directly related to the ratings of the program during which your ad is being aired.

Because advertisers want their message to reach the largest audience possible, the station charges a premium for the largest viewing audience. In a large market (approximately 500,000 residents) rates can run from several hundred to several thousand dollars per minute based on the time slot that the spot is aired.

Because you will be running ads of public interest it may be possible to negotiate for reduced rates. You may even find that the station is eager to form a partnership with a

high-profile public service effort such as an ozone alert program. You can use this to your advantage by proposing a mutually beneficial relationship with a local station.

Innovative communicators in some areas have successfully negotiated deals with news directors where the station becomes the sponsor of an ozone alert program.

They are given “first notification” of ozone developments and are allowed to identify themselves as a sponsor or partner of the local program (this is a very high-profile method of showing civic-minded support on the part of the station). In return, the station agrees to run PSAs or deeply-discounted paid ads during the news, frequently immediately before

or after the weather report.

Some agencies have developed close relationships with meteorologists and keep them well informed of developments. The meteorologists, in turn, provide daily segments on the ozone readings during the ozone season. A station in Missouri offers extensive support to the local ozone program. The program receives good coverage during the weather cast and through four daily ozone reports. It provides air time for 300 PSAs per year. The station produced

### **What Do Ratings Mean And Who Determines Them?**

*Ratings are the percentage of the potential viewing “universe” that a particular show is reaching as determined by a rating service (typically Nielsen for television and Arbitron for radio). Each percent is equal to one rating point which determines advertising rates. Ratings are further divided by demographics like age, gender, income, education, etc. Demographic figures can also affect ad rates, especially in radio. Because viewing and listening habits vary with the seasons, ad rates are also valued differently during different calendar quarters. Typically, spring and summer are the lowest-rated quarters and ads are the least expensive during these times.*



and broadcast an hour-long special on the local ozone program and related air pollution issues and donated copies of the program, to be loaned free-of-charge, to local video-rental outlets.

## **Audio**

While many of the rules for videos (length of spots, placement of ads and PSAs, ratings-to-cost figures, etc.) also apply to ads recorded for radio air play, there are some differences. Generally, these spots are less expensive to produce. As previously noted, production prices depend on variables including number of voices, music, and the complexity of the soundtrack. While professional actors along with music and sound effects add to the production costs, they also add value to the finished product. A single voice spot read by an amateur with no background music or effects will lack impact and could even hurt your program's credibility.

Audio PSAs are likely to be aired at off-time hours when the audience is smaller. Prices for a 30-second spot during morning or evening drive-time, the highest ratings periods for radio, in a large market range from \$125 to \$400. Mid-day rates during the week can run between \$75 and \$150. Weekend day rates are about \$50 to \$75 per 30-second spot.

It may be possible to find a professional firm that will be willing to donate their services for a public service project. Firms that have contracts with other agencies affiliated with your local government may be willing to donate time as a courtesy. Always contact all the appropriate firms in your area before agreeing to pay for professional services.

## **Reproduction**

Be aware that your costs for reproduction or printing will vary greatly depending on an array of factors. The number of colors of ink used, the size and type of paper, binding (if applicable), and the reproduction method used are some of the items that determine the cost of reproducing your product.

Black-and-white, on 8.5x11" 20# bond (plain copier paper), single sided, reproduced from a master layout on a copier is the most economical process. Full-color, on 80# or heavier, glossy paper, and printed on an offset press would represent the high end of the cost scale. The size of the poster or number of pages in a fact sheet or brochure, along with photos and graphics will also affect your cost. Be aware that the bulk of your reproduction costs will be represented by up-front or setup fees. This covers the difficult and labor intensive process of preparing your product for actual reproduction. Once a document or poster has been setup, actual reproduction is a relatively simple matter. Therefore, the difference in cost between reproducing 100 and 1000 will be negligible in comparison—often, only a matter of \$20 or \$30. This is a prime reason for not dating your product if possible. This way you can order enough copies to last an extended period. Also, once the setup has been accomplished, and the printer is informed that there will likely be additional copies ordered, they can save the original setup work, making reprints without revisions inexpensive compared to the original printing costs.

## **Conclusion**

The development of an outreach program may seem as complicated as formulating your regulatory strategy, but remember that a few basic guidelines will help your efforts:

- Define your goals.
- Identify your audience and their needs.
- Determine your capabilities and limitations.

If you follow these guidelines and think creatively you should be able to develop effective communication materials regardless of your past experience or current budget restraints.

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